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San Francisco Homeless Count 2005
Final Report

Prepared By
Shelagh Little
Deputy Director, Housing

And

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Senior Analyst

sco Department of Human Services

March 18, 2005

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Acknowledgements

The San Francisco Department of Human Services (DHS) would like to acknowledge the following agencies and individuals for their contributions to the count of homeless persons on the street that took place on January 25, 2005.

The following agencies provided volunteer support for the street count: Baker Places, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center, Catholic Charities, City Attorney's Office, Coalition on Homelessness Family Rights and Dignity, Community Focus, Community Housing Partnership, Compass Community Services, Conard House, Conservator's Office, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Covenant House California, Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Adult and Aging Services, Episcopal Community Services, Friendship House, Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, HomeBase, Larkin Street Youth Services, Lutheran Social Services, Mayor's Office, Mayor's Office on Disability, Mayor's Office of Housing, OMI Family Resource Center, Project Open Hand, Public Guardian, Safety Network Program, Salvation Army, SF Network Ministries, San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, Southeast One Stop, St. Anthony's Foundation, St. Vincent DePaul (MSC South), Tenderloin Housing Clinic, Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, UCSF-City-Wide Case Management, United Council of Human Services, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, University of San Francisco, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Walden House, and Young Community Developers.

The following persons/agencies assisted DHS by providing information on public spaces frequented by homeless persons in preparation for the street count: San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team, City-wide Clinic Consortium, staff of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and the San Francisco Police Department.

Ben Amyes of the San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team conducted pre-tests of public spaces and mapped counting routes during the weeks leading up to the street count.

Brian Pangan of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department coordinated the count of homeless persons living in Golden Gate Park in the early morning hours of January 26, 2005.

Lt. David Lazar of the San Francisco Police Department coordinated safety training and security for volunteers during the street count.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 4
Street Count 4
Methodology 4
Timing of Count 5
Volunteer Recruitment and Training 5
Logistics 5
Who was counted 6
Areas covered 6
Methodology Shortcomings 6
Street Count Results 7
Street Population By District: 2000-2005 8
2005 Street Population By Gender, Race, Family Status and Age 8
Shelters and Transitional Housing 8
Resource Centers 9
Treatment Facilities 9
SF General 9
Jail 9
Summary: 2005 Homeless Count 9
ATTACHMENT 1: VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS 10
ATTACHMENT 2: TALLY SHEET 13

Introduction

San Francisco's homeless count, conducted on January 25, 2005, consisted of a point-in-time census of the street population and homeless persons residing in shelters, resource centers, transitional housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment beds, San Francisco General Hospital and the County Jail.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all jurisdictions that receive McKinney-Vento Act Continuum of Care funding to submit detailed information on their homeless populations, both sheltered and unsheltered, as part of annual funding applications. Beginning in 2005, HUD will require the count to be conducted bi-annually at a minimum. The 2004 funding application specified that jurisdictions were to conduct their 2005 count in the final week of January 2005.

For sheltered homeless people, Continuums of Care (CoCs) are instructed to count all adults, children, and unaccompanied youth residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, including domestic violence shelters, residential programs for runaway/homeless youth, and any hotel/motel/apartment voucher arrangements paid by a public/private agency because the person is homeless. For unsheltered homeless people, CoCs are instructed to count all adults, children and unaccompanied youth sleeping in places not meant for human habitation, which include:

> Streets, alleys, parks, parking ramps, parts of the highway system, transportation depots and other parts of transportation systems (e.g. subway tunnels, railroad cars), all-night commercial establishments (e.g. move theaters, laundromats, restaurants), abandoned buildings, building roofs or stairwells, chicken coops and other farm outbuildings, caves, campgrounds, vehicles and other similar places. (2004 CoC application)

While HUD does not require reporting on the number of homeless persons residing in hospitals, jails, and treatment facilities, San Francisco opted to include these homeless persons in its count for the purpose of more accurately capturing the full current extent of homelessness in San Francisco.

Street Count

Methodology

In designing its street count methodology, San Francisco drew upon best practices as detailed in a recent HUD publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*.[1]

San Francisco selected a "simple street count" methodology (directly observed count of persons in non-shelter, non-service locations) using the "public places method". The need to cover a large area with a limited number of volunteers prevented surveying or interviewing the persons counted. An unrelated effort, Project Homeless Connect, provides an opportunity for in-depth data collection on the service needs and housing histories of unsheltered homeless persons.

Public places counts are conducted at "known locations" (those areas where homeless people are reported to congregate) and/or strive for "complete coverage" (where every part of a

[1]Abt Associates. October 2004. *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People.* U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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specified geography, such as an entire downtown area, is covered). San Francisco combined these two approaches by providing complete coverage in more densely populated and commercial areas, and selected coverage focusing on known locations or "hotspots" in more sparsely populated and residential areas (see "Areas Covered" below).

> "Communities often pair the complete coverage of one geographic location with a count of homeless people at known locations in outlying areas. For example, a CoC may send enumerators up and down every street in a downtown area, and send groups to outlying parts of the city where homeless people are known to live and sleep." (Abt Associates 2004)

Timing of Count
San Francisco's street count was conducted from 8 p.m. until 12 a.m. on the night of Tuesday, January 25, 2005. As mentioned above, HUD recommended that all jurisdictions conduct their homeless counts during the final week of January 2005.

HUD prescribed that the count be conducted:

- *at night*, when those who utilize shelters are in for the night, to minimize the risk of double counting the population that utilizes shelters.
- *during winter* because winter has historically been a time of peak shelter use across the nation. The shelter census and street counts are conducted simultaneously, so that both the sheltered and unsheltered population are captured.
- *on a weeknight* to minimize the disruption caused by high pedestrian traffic or special events that attract visitors.
- *during the final week of the month* so that those who use public benefits or limited income to rent transient housing for part of the month will not be missed. (Abt Associates 2004)

Volunteer Recruitment and Training
To conduct the street count, the Human Services Agency (HSA) recruited approximately 250 volunteers. A "Save the Date" announcement was e-mailed and mailed to more than 1,500 non-profit homeless service provider agency and government agency employees approximately one month prior to the count, with potential volunteers asked to RSVP. Volunteers included City employees, homeless service provider staff, and members of the general public.

On the night of the count, volunteers were provided training on whom and how to count to ensure a uniform methodology. A handout entitled "Homeless Count 2005 Volunteer Instructions" was provided to each volunteer (see Attachment 1). In addition to detailed instructions on how to count, the handout provided a sample tally sheet and safety information and contact phone numbers for assistance during the count.

Logistics
Teams of 2-3 volunteers covered routes of approximately six to thirty blocks each, with routes in commercial and well-populated routes covered on foot and more sparsely populated and residential areas covered by car. Volunteers either self-selected as teams or were paired based on experience (newer volunteers paired with those who had volunteered before). Each team was provided a map of its route and tally sheets to record basic demographic information and the location of each person counted (intersection or street address). See tally sheet, Attachment 2. In addition, at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count.

Who was counted
Volunteers were instructed how to assess whether a person encountered was homeless. The following factors, alone and in combination, were to be considered:

- Walking or standing "with no purpose" (loitering)
- Panhandling (with or without cup/sign)
- Carrying bags, backpacks, garbage bags, suitcases, blankets, and/or bedrolls
- With shopping cart containing personal belongings
- Recycling, especially large numbers of items
- Sleeping on the street
- Disheveled
- Inebriated/passed out on sidewalk

Special instructions were provided for those living in vehicles, tents, and other makeshift dwellings. For safety reasons, volunteers were told not to enter abandoned buildings – many such buildings in San Francisco are structurally unsound and/or are sites of illegal activity. Also for safety reasons, volunteers were advised not to enter parks, but instead to count persons that are observable from the sidewalk (a census of persons sleeping in Golden Gate Park was conducted the following morning by park staff and is included in the final street count numbers). Flashlights were provided to volunteers to allow them to count homeless individuals in dimly or unlit areas, such as parks, from afar.

Areas covered
In preparation for the count, DHS staff collected information regarding areas where homeless persons regularly congregate. Information on known encampments and "hot spots" was provided by the Police Department, homeless outreach teams, currently and formerly homeless persons, staff of members Board of Supervisors and members of the general public (as documented by agency staff). In addition, DHS "pre-tested" locations throughout the City during evening hours in the weeks preceding the count.

> "Pre-screening or pre-testing the selected study areas will produce better enumeration results. Pre-screening will alert organizers to any problems or issues in each study area, including hidden locations that enumerators might overlook and differing patterns of use between the day or night." (Abt Associates 2004)

Based on the information gathered from the above described sources and collected during pre-testing, DHS devised more than 100 counting routes spanning all eleven supervisorial districts. Complete or near-complete coverage was provided in densely populated and/or commercial districts with higher known concentrations of homeless persons (Districts 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10), while more residential districts with a lower homeless presence received selective coverage that focused on identified areas where homeless tend to congregate (Districts 1, 2, 4, 7, and 11). Volunteer maps were annotated with information regarding encampments and hotspots so that they would be sure to count persons at these locations.

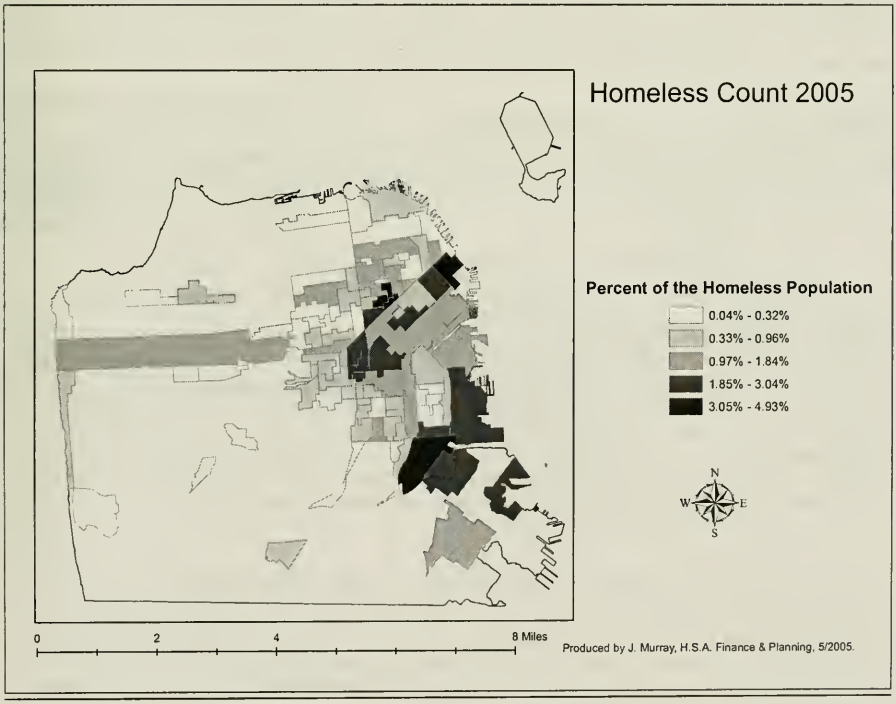
Methodology Shortcomings
Point-in-time counts are "snap shots" of the homeless population and as such may or may not be representative of the homeless population over time. Other concerns regarding point-in-time counts and the methodology chosen include:

- Volunteers may miss homeless persons if they are hidden or obscured (especially in inclement weather);
- The exclusion of parks and abandoned buildings due to concerns about volunteer safety may result in an undercount;
- A "known locations" or hotspots approach risks missing homeless persons in other, less frequented locations;
- Subjective assessments regarding who is homeless assure some margin of error in the final count (some assessed as homeless may be housed, while some who are in fact homeless may not appear to be).

Despite these shortcomings, the count does provide the City with information regarding the trend of the number of homeless over time. Because this and previous years' counts were conducted in the same manner and around the same time of the year, the current results provide a sound basis for comparison and enable us to conclude with confidence that the number of homeless in San Francisco has declined over the past two years.

Street Count Results

Volunteers counted an unduplicated total of **2,497** persons on the street. The adjusted total (see footnote number 3 on the following page) was **2,655**. District and demographic breakdowns of the unsheltered persons counted follow. The following map details the concentration of homeless people counted across the routes.



Street Population By District: 2000-2005

The results of the street count conducted on January 25, 2005 (shaded area) are presented below alongside results from previous counts for purposes of comparison.

District	4/27/00[2]	10/25/00	10/25/01	10/29/02	1/25/05	Adjusted 2005[3]
1 (including Golden Gate Park)	N/A	3	69	127	75	76
2	N/A	46	92	96	22	79
3	N/A	80	280	444	166	167
4	N/A	9	161	331	34	97
5	N/A	136	233	569	109	110
6	N/A	1,004	1,158	1,071	1,232	1,233
7	N/A	9	34	266	10	25
8	N/A	113	108	374	158	159
9	N/A	205	238	249	191	192
10	N/A	412	733	811	483	484
11	N/A	9	50	197	17	34
Unsure		7				
TOTAL	1,805	2,033	3,156	4,535	2,497	2,655

2005 Street Population By Gender, Race, Family Status and Age

Gender				Race/Ethnicity						Family Status			Age		
F	M	T	U	A	B	L	O	U	W	F	S	U	A	U	Y
14.9%	65.3%	.5%	19.3%	1.4%	36.4%	6.8%	.6%	23.3%	31.5%	1.7%	83.9%	14.5%	80.3%	18.9%	.8%
F=Female M=Male T=Transgendered U=Unsure				A=Asian B=Black L=Latino O=Other U=Unknown W=White						F=Family S=Single U=Unknown			A=Adult (18+) U=Unknown Y=Youth (<18)		

Shelters and Transitional Housing

A total of 1,754 unduplicated persons were recorded as utilizing emergency shelters and a total of 768 were recorded as utilizing transitional housing on the night of January 25, 2005. Information on the shelter population for the night of January 25, 2005 was collected from the City's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), CHANGES, as well as an independent survey conducted by HomeBase under contract with DHS. Information on residents of transitional housing during the night of January 25, 2005 was collected as part of the independent survey conducted by HomeBase under contract with DHS.

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[2] The report for the count conducted on April 27,2000 did not include a breakdown by district.

[3] Because the volunteer street count provided only partial coverage in some districts as described above, the final count includes an adjustment factor for those districts (see italics). The adjustment factor is based on the relative rates of homelessness in the 11 districts as recorded in the three counts conducted in 2000 and 2001 (the 2002 count was not included in this calculation because the numbers recorded were widely divergent with the numbers observed in 2000, 2001, and 2005, which were more consistent). The overall adjustment was +6.3% (from 2,497 to 2,655).

Resource Centers

A total of 192 persons were counted as being in Resource Centers on the night of the homeless count. Information on the population counted in 24 hour resource centers is based on the number of persons counted in 24 hour resource centers at 12:00 AM on the night of the homeless count as reported to DHS by Coordinated Referral, a program of CATS.

Treatment Facilities

A total of 373 persons were recorded as utilizing treatment beds on the night of the homeless count. Information on the number of homeless persons in residential treatment was provided by the Department of Public Health and based on those who self-declared as homeless upon intake. Treatment facilities included inpatient psychiatric services, Acute Diversion Units, medically-assisted and social model detox facilities, and residential drug treatment facilities.

SF General

A total of 91 homeless persons were recorded as utilizing hospital inpatient services on the night of the homeless count. Information on the number of homeless persons inpatient at General on the night of the Count was provided by the Medical Discharge Social Work unit of General Hospital and based on those that self-declared as homeless upon admission to the Hospital.

Jail

A total of 415 homeless persons were incarcerated in the San Francisco County Jail system on the night of the count. Information on the number of persons in jail was provided by Jail Health Services and based on those that self-declared as homeless upon incarceration.

Summary: 2005 Homeless Count

Combining all of the categories noted above, a total of **6,248** individuals were identified as homeless in the 2005 count. The results of the homeless count conducted on January 25, 2005 (shaded area) appear in the table below. The 2002 count results also appear in the table for purposes of comparison.

	Single Adults	Persons In Families	Total 2005	2002	% Change
Street	2,613	42	2,655	4,535	- 41%
Emergency Shelter	1,434	320	1,754	2,308	- 8%[4]
Transitional Housing and Treatment	897	244	1,141	1,365	- 16%
Resource Centers	192	0	192	331	- 42%
Jail	415	0	415	Not reported	N/A
SF General Hospital	91	0	91	101	- 10%
Total	5,642	606	6,248	8,640	- 28%

[4]2002 Shelter numbers included 395 persons on the Connecting Point wait list, which includes families living doubled up with family/friends. These numbers were not included in the 2005 count. The percent change includes the decline in numbers of persons utilizing emergency shelter only.

HOMELESS COUNT 2005
VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS

Welcome and thank you for volunteering for Homeless Count 2005. The following instructions are provided for your use during the Count.

TEAMS

Teams must contain at least two persons, and at least one of the two people must be carrying a cell phone. If you are volunteering alone and have not yet been matched up with a partner or team, we will find a partner for you. Generally, one team member takes responsibility for completing the tally sheet as the count proceeds, while the other(s) navigate the route and look for persons to count.

YOUR ROUTE

Your team will be provided a route map. Each team is responsible for all of the square blocks within the outlined area (not only the periphery). When you get to the outer boundary of your map, cover that side of the street only (the side closest to the rest of your route). Do not cross the street.

Some routes are notated with comments regarding known "hot spots" or encampments where homeless people are known to congregate. This information is provided so that you 1) will pay special attention to these areas and 2) so that you can exercise appropriate caution. **Do not limit your count to these places.**

WHOM TO COUNT

Counting requires subjective judgments as to who is homeless. The following factors, alone and in combination, should be considered when deciding when to count an individual.

- Walking or standing "with no purpose" (loitering)
- Panhandling (with or without cup/sign)
- Carrying bags/backbacks/garbage bags/suitcases/blankets/bedrolls
- With shopping cart containing personal belongings
- Recycling, especially large numbers of items
- Sleeping on the street
- Vehicles with windows covered (see below)
- Tents (see below)

- Makeshift lean-tos (see below)
- Boxes (see below)
- Disheveled
- Inebriated/passed out on sidewalk

DO NOT (AUTOMATICALLY) COUNT
- People engaged in illegal activities (drug activity, prostitution)
- People leaving bars/other establishments
- People waiting for busses

HOW TO COUNT

CARS (VEHICULARLY HOUSED)

On some routes, most of the homeless persons counted will be living in cars, vans, trailers and campers. Use your judgment as to whether to count these bearing in mind the following criteria:

- The vehicle's windows are covered
- The vehicle is very crammed/cluttered
- The vehicle is occupied but obviously not operational
- The camper/trailer is not attached to a cab
- The camper/trailer is parked in a desolate area and/or near an encampment

Do not approach the vehicle. Assume two persons per vehicle. Mark "unsure" for gender, race/ethnicity, single/family, and age.

TENTS, OTHER STRUCTURES

As with vehicles, do not approach. Assume two persons per structure. Mark "unsure" for gender, race/ethnicity, single/family, and age.

COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

If there is a commercial establishment on your route likely to attract homeless people (e.g. fast food restaurants, transportation depots), enter and count as safety allows.

PARKS

Do not enter parks, even if they are on your route map.

ALLEYS

Do not enter "dead end" alleys on foot or in cars. Observe as much as possible from a safe distance and make reasonable assumptions.

DRIVING ROUTES

- If you are responsible for a driving route, you may, as time and safety precautions permit, decide to park your vehicle and walk part(s) of the

route (e.g. commercial districts) to get a more accurate count. Do NOT exit your car in desolate area. Use discretion in deciding whether to get out of your car.

- If an on-ramp is part of your route (driving routes only), count from the car at the base of the on-ramp. Do not get on the freeway.

TALLYING YOUR COUNT

You will be provided tally sheets for your route. Please fill out one line of the tally sheet for each person observed. Most of the information is check boxes or yes/no. Under location, please provide an intersection or street address where the person was observed. Please see the attached sample.

SAFETY/EMERGENCIES

Do not engage anyone during the course of the count.

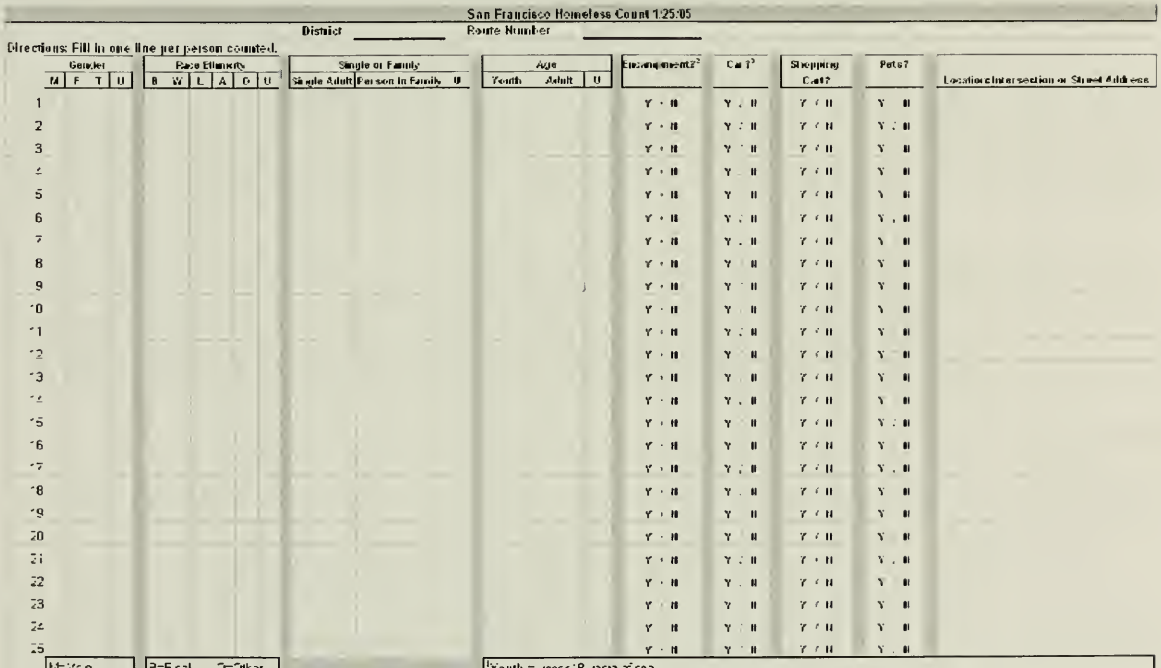
If your personal safety seems in jeopardy at any time, call Lt. Lazar at 519-1367. Volunteers in the Tenderloin should call 713-0847.

If someone on the street appears to need medical attention, call the dispatch center contact (760-1390), who will then contact paramedics.

If you are asked about your activities, you should reply "We're counting homeless persons so we can get more funding for our City for services," and continue on your way.

For any other issues that come up as you count, call the dispatch center at (415) 725-1354.

ATTACHMENT 2: TALLY SHEET



San Francisco Homeless Count 1/25/05

District _____ Route Number _____

Directions: Fill in one line per person counted.

	Gender				Race Ethnicity						Single or Family			Age			Encampments[2]	Car?[3]	Shopping Cart?	Pets?	Location (intersection or Street Address)
	M	F	T	U	B	W	L	A	O	U	Single Adult	Person in Family	U	Youth	Adult	U					
1																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
2																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
3																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
4																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
5																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
6																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
7																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
8																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
9																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
10																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
11																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
12																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
13																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
14																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
15																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
16																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
17																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
18																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
19																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
20																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
21																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
22																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
23																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
24																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	
25																	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	

M=Male
F=Female
T=Transgenders
U=Unsure

B=Black
W=White
L=Latino
A=Asian
O=Other
U=Unsure

[1]Youth = under 18 years of age
[2]Encampments are communities of five or more homeless persons in a group of tents or other living structures. Circle Y(es) or N(o).
[3]Car: Circle Y(es) or N(o). Count two persons for each car being used as a dwelling (one line each).